

Summary of Public Comment – Community Workshop #3

Workshop convened October 27, 2021 – 6:30-9:00 pm via Zoom

The City of Berkeley’s Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department and the San Francisco Water Emergency Transportation Authority hosted a third in a series of three workshop to solicit community feedback on the *Berkeley Pier and Ferry Feasibility Study*. Workshop #1 (1/21/21) introduced the project and four pier examples; Workshop #2 (8/10/21) presented two landside and five pier concepts. In Workshop #3, the project team presented the Preferred Conceptual Alternative consisting of landside improvements and a pier and ferry terminal configuration.

This summary consists of two sections: 1) the questions posed by the community and project responses provided after the workshop; and, 2) key themes from the facilitated discussion on the Preferred Conceptual Alternative. The agenda and presenters consisted of:

- Welcome, Scott Ferris, City and Kevin Connolly, WETA
- Responding to Community Questions and Feedback
 - Summary of Public Comment Received to Date, Peter Bluhon, Bluhon Group
 - WETA Business Plan and Ferry Viability, Michael Gougherty, WETA; William Hurrell, CDM Smith; Ashleigh Kanat, Economic & Planning Systems
 - Linkage to BMASP and Economic Objectives, Nelson Lam, City
 - Q&A on technical presentations ***(Summary below)**
- Present Preferred Conceptual Alternative, Kent Royle, Wong Logan Architects
- Facilitated Discussion and Public Comments, Peter Bluhon ***(Summary below)**
- Next Steps and Adjourn

Workshop presentations are available at <https://www.cityofberkeley.info/parks/pier/>

1. Q&A on Technical Presentations

Following the project team’s technical presentations, the Zoom chat feature was made available for participants to pose questions. Several questions were addressed at the workshop while others required subsequent follow up are listed below by topic. Participant questions are underlined.

Planning Process & Schedule

When will the design process launch? / Who has decided to go forward with this?

The next phase, Design/Permitting, will only go forward if approved by the City Council and WETA Board and if funding is identified. This could happen in FY 2022.

When can we expect a functioning ferry from the new pier?

If the project proceeds, the earliest would be 2027.

It seems the questionnaire was answered by 399 people. Where were the questionnaires distributed?

The questionnaire was posted to the project website from March 22nd to June 6th 2021. The questionnaire was mentioned in Workshop #2, discussed in a Bekeleyside article, and by WETA.

Parking & Mobility

With a ridership of about 2,000/day from Berkeley to SF, how many parking spaces do you anticipate?

Note that the ridership forecast is the number of “boardings”. To calculate an estimate of the number of “persons” this represents, divide by 2. Because commute patterns are rapidly changing due to the growth of e-bikes, rideshare, and other modes, this project has identified a goal of 250 spaces for ferry parking.

How will you ensure parking is not monopolized by ferry riders at the expense of boat owners and Marina recreational users?

Ferry parking will be limited to a portion of the 199 Seawall Drive parking lot. The City anticipates using parking enforcement to regulate ferry parking so that all other users are not impacted. Also, the City anticipates increased non-auto travel by ferry passengers and other users coming to the Waterfront.

Does the analysis include newer mobility solutions (e.g. e-bikes), which extend connection range and service area and reduce travel times?

Yes, these are considered and will have a significant focus in the next phase of the project.

Is there a plan for AC Transit to bring people to Berkeley destinations, or bring Berkeley residents to the Ferry? How will riders get to and from the terminal?

AC Transit has a bus stop at the entrance of the pier at the terminus of University Ave. at Seawall Drive. WETA and the City will collaborate with AC Transit to bring timed, seamless connections with ferries. Also, local shuttles and other non-single occupancy modes of travel are being considered.

Were any comparisons made between making improvements to public transportation (e.g. buses, BART) against the benefits that ferry service might bring to Berkeley?

Other modes of public transportation have been established. Berkeley ferry service is endorsed by a multiagency Core Capacity Transit Study led by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) as a key, medium-term regional project for enhancing transit capacity in the Bay Bridge corridor. In 2021, the final Plan Bay Area 2050 (approved by MTC) included Berkeley ferry service as part of its financially-constrained, long-range Regional Transportation Plan.

Funding, Fiscal & Business

What retail opportunities are you looking at?

Small mobile coffee/breakfast carts are being considered to serve the ferry terminal. Other larger opportunities are part of the BMASP planning process.

What does the future of the Marina look like if we don't take serious steps to bring economic development and users there? Could the Marina suffer the fate that the pedestrian pier has suffered?

The Berkeley Marina Area Specific Plan (BMASP) is a three-year planning effort to develop new ideas for a financially self-sustaining marina that preserves recreational uses and environmental stewardship. See project information at www.cityofberkeley.bmasp.

Increased income to the Marina is dependent on Council action, but they have been robbing Marina income for years. Why would that change?

In recent years, Council has authorized several improvement projects at the Marina to address the decaying infrastructure, such as University Ave, Marina Blvd, and Spinnaker Way — these are currently being renovated. Bay Trail Segment 3, bicycle electronic lockers, and new sailing docks in the South Basin were implemented during the pandemic. Docks D and E will be renovated in the next two years, and several more capital projects are underway. The ferry terminal at the Marina along with potential new dining and other activities could be the catalyst for more economic activity.

Will the ferry ultimately provide revenue to Berkeley, or will the attraction of the Berkeley Marina provide the passengers to the ferry?

The current ridership forecast is that there will be demand for ferry commuting from Berkeley to San Francisco and South San Francisco during the week, and recreational travel during the weekend to both San Francisco and Marin. There is a smaller projected demand for riders coming to Berkeley, either for recreation or work, and this is projected to grow. Historically, the Berkeley Marina can see between 200,000 to 300,000 person visits per year from throughout the region to visit the restaurants, parks, and special events. The new ferry service would help bring some of these visitors to Berkeley.

What will be the source of subsidy for the ferry? How will the Marina fund profit from a ferry?

We anticipate Regional Measure 3 and other regional, state, and federal funds will be available for ferry operations. The Marina Fund may see a fiscal benefit from increased foot-traffic by ferry passengers at existing businesses as tenant leases require rent payments to be based on gross revenues.

It seems like some of the only revenue from the Marina comes from sailing groups using the protected area. Why would you put a ferry in there?

The location and configuration of the new pier for both ferry and recreation use have been optimized to minimize impact to the existing use of the area.

Design, Environment & Other

Most topics address business interests. What about interests of people just wanting a somewhat natural recreation area without business enterprises?

The pier-ferry project is required to conduct a full environmental review to minimize impacts on the environment. All other natural recreation areas at the Berkeley Waterfront will be unaffected by the pier-ferry project. The BMASP planning process has a goal of ensuring the stewardship of the environment at the Berkeley Waterfront.

Can City staff elaborate on how "nature is integrated" into the waterfront area? What wildlife habitat features have the City supported to this end?

The existing nature features that the City maintains are the Cesar Chavez Park, Shorebird Nature Area, and Meadow site, and areas within the Eastshore State Park. A potential roosting bird platform is envisioned at the derelict portion of the abandoned pier.

How is the ferry supposed to increase access to recreation as claimed? One must consider the **net effect** on recreation access, which includes the deterrent effects of extra traffic and parking issues.

The preferred concept includes a new non-motorized watercraft access point at the south terminus of Seawall Drive. The enhanced bus and shuttle services will improve access to the broader Berkeley community. The new dual-use pier in the preferred concept will bring back recreation on the pier that was lost when the Berkeley Pier was closed in 2015.

Are there plans to dredge a channel so that ferries can reach a potential Berkeley terminal?

Yes, dredging at the northside of the pier is envisioned for the ferry facility project. Dredging the main channel for the inner harbor of the Marina has recently been funded for design, permitting, and environmental clearance. Ultimately, the goal is to dredge the area from north side of the pier into the fairway of the inner harbor to provide unimpeded boating access for all.

Can this include additional houseboat docking?

The number of houseboats at the Berkeley Marina are limited to 13 slips per the Bay Conservation Development Commission (BCDC). The proposed dual-use pier will be located outside of the protected Berkeley Marina and will be subject to significant wind and wave action; as such it is not feasible to provide sheltered and protected any new houseboat docking at the new dual-use pier.

It seems Berkeley doesn't push Caltrans to finish cleaning the Seabreeze homeless camp. Why doesn't Berkeley make sure that is properly cleaned?

Caltrans recently cleaned the area and will install permanent fencing in 2022.

Ferry Operations Funding

How will ferry-related revenues cover the expected subsidy required to support the ferry?

Fares cover a portion of WETA's operating costs. Additional subsidies include bridge toll monies available to WETA.

How much is the subsidy per rider (not the farebox recovery ratio)?

Subsidy per rider for the Berkeley-SF service is in the range of \$4-5/rider in FY26\$

What is the cost per passenger mile subsidy and how does that compare to cost/passenger mile for other forms of transit?

This cannot be determined at this time.

Ferry Service

In the 1970s, there was a weekend ferry service between Berkeley and Larkspur stopping at Angel Island. Is that possible to add now?

This is not assumed to be a part of the service contract in the WETA/Berkeley Service Business Plan.

Since WETA doesn't serve Larkspur, what inter-agency agreements would be needed?

If determined to be feasible prior to operations, then an agreement would be needed with the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway & Transportation District.

What are estimated ticket prices for a one-way trip Berkeley/SF and Berkeley/Larkspur?

Estimated cost for Berkeley to be Clipper one way adult \$4.50 – \$5.15 to SF and Mission Bay.

Unknown for Larkspur. Special events to cover margin operating costs to provide the services.

According to the current survey and the budget, which routes do you expect to open (if possible)?

Planned currently are the Ferry Terminal, Mission Bay, Larkspur (weekends) and special events.

Are there eight departures in the morning and in the afternoon? What is the expected number of departures in the a.m. and p.m. hours?

14 departures each direction each weekday. For Berkeley to SF, it would be 8 trips in the morning and 6 in the afternoon. For SF to Berkeley, it would be 6 in the morning and 8 in the afternoon.

Will Clipper Cards be accepted?

Yes.

If usage is trending towards non-commuter, shouldn't the schedule be expanded later into the evening to make the service more useful to non-commuters?

It will be.

Ferry Ridership Projections

Where do ridership numbers come from? Especially when as specific as "5,047."

Numbers come from the Alameda County Transportation Commission Travel Demand Model: <https://www.alamedactc.org/planning/congestion-management/countywide-travel-demand-model/>

In slide 16, “Comps with Existing Ridership,” both Oakland/Alameda and Vallejo show a decrease in ridership on weekends. Why do you project an increase in Berkeley for weekends over weekdays?
In 2019 the majority of ridership was higher in weekdays. Post-pandemic there are higher average weekends is than for weekdays. This is the case for all the service routes.

What percent of trans-Bay commuters would use the ferry service — isn't it almost trivial amount?
For WETA services had an average of 12,000/weekday using WETA across the Bay.

Are there polls asking who would use the ferry rather than your own projections?
WETA has done no polling.

Other Ferry-related

How many BTUs/passenger-mile do ferries expend vs. BART or bus?
Not able to be calculated.

How many decibels do current ferries project underwater and what marine life is impacted?
Not certain what vessel type is being used. WETA recently completed an EIR/EIS for expansion of Downton SF Terminal, which evaluated underwater noise and no significant impacts were identified.

How well does the regional model perform? Can you provide information on predicted vs. actual ridership for existing routes as a check, say for SF or Oakland/Alameda?
There is a validation report in WETA's Regional Hovercraft Report (2019) and the model worked well enough to move forward.

2. Facilitated Discussion on the Preferred Conceptual Alternative

Kent Royle presented key elements of the pier and terminal, after which a facilitated general discussion followed. Participant questions and comments are indicated with bullets. Quotation marks indicate near-verbatim statements of individuals. Not all comments are included here.

Pier & Ferry Docking Configuration

Most participants supported Option 1 ('Sword') while one supported Option 3 (“as the only safe option for boaters”) and one supported Option 4. Most supported ferry docking on the north side. Other comments:

- The Marina is a refuge and yet the project emphasizes commercial activity/use. More undeveloped, non-commercial space is needed at the Marina.

Mobility & Parking

There was a general statement of caution (and concern, among some) around the potential of ferry passenger parking impacting existing recreational users. People feel parking is insufficient now for

boaters at 199 Seawall Dr and ferry would worsen this shortage.

Other comments and questions:

- Will non-single occupancy transportation reach 60%, as suggested? — there is no evidence of this in the Bay Area.
- 250 parking spots should be for recreation, not for a commuter terminal.
- Won't there be new commuter habits? Aren't there more recreational users at the Marina?
- Charter fishing boats go early in the a.m., but the South Cove East Parking Lot is locked before 9 a.m. Many kayakers want to paddle before 9 a.m. but can't park near the docks. In the new plan, the proposed bike lockers at the fish cleaning station is a terrible idea.

Environmental & Implementation

- "There is a huge BCDC issue."
- Dredging is a big issue and will affect the benthic life around the pier.
- "What about 404 permits?"

Funding & Costs

- Of the \$84M budget, what is the WETA share?
- Ferry revenue won't go to the City and will not generate new revenue for the Marina.
- We need transparency in fiscal matters: where will funds come from?

Planning/Design

- The scale of the ferry is too big.
- What about nature at the Waterfront?
- "This project is too ambitious and destructive. We should push the timeline way out. We need more studies, environmental, engineering work... This will turn a beautiful nature refuge into a circus. We should be doing small projects instead."

General Comments

- "The Marina will go bankrupt if we don't move forward with positive projects like the ferry."
- "I enthusiastically support the ferry project. An electric ferry would be good. The Marina is dying and needs more activity. I am an urban designer, so please don't plant lawn at the marina. I like the flexible space as something exciting, like Brooklyn Basin in SF. I would love bikes on the ferry."
- "I push back on your statements of 'community support' for the project. We set up a petition on moveon.org that currently has 500 signatures registering concern about this project."
- "I see the ferry project as infeasible. If we get a new pier only if we do a ferry, then this is inequitable."